

Malvern, PA — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak released the following statement about his attendance at the “Women Making a Difference” corporate luncheon of the Chester County Fund for Women and Girls on May 4, 2007.

The Fund is dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls and all members of the Chester County community through grants and education. Since its inception, it has awarded \$482,000 in grants to nonprofit organizations working to improve the lives of women and girls in Chester County. Through its work, the Fund seeks to serve as a voice for the needs of women and girls and to empower women of all backgrounds and in all stages of life to make informed decisions about their lives, and in turn, to improve themselves and their communities.

“When I was young, economic opportunities for women were limited. Seemingly, very few professions were open to women – teaching, secretarial work, social work, and nursing, for instance. If women chose to explore other fields, they faced significant barriers.

This is not so today.

Along with the increase in the number of women attending college and graduate school over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of advanced degrees awarded to women. For example, in 1970, women received only 13 percent of all Ph.D. degrees; 8 percent of M.D. degrees; 5 percent of all law degrees; and a mere 1 percent of dentistry degrees. However, by the end of the 20th century, women earned an average of 40 percent of Ph.D.s; 41 percent of M.D. degrees; 44 percent of law degrees; and 36 percent of dentistry degrees. Gains in education have advanced women significantly in the world of work. Today, women make up 46 percent of America's workforce. Women occupy almost half of all managerial and professional positions in the country, and women currently own 40 percent of America's businesses.

Yet significant obstacles remain.

Unfortunately, in our country, female students still lag behind male students in their pursuit of math, science and engineering-related degrees. Today, women earn only one-seventh of all

computer science doctorate degrees, and only one-eighth of all engineering degrees awarded in the United States. Furthermore, although women are making great strides in America's corporate world, they still have not penetrated the executive arena. Currently, less than one percent of all top corporate managers are female.

Even though the law has dictated equal pay for men and women since 1963, women still earn only 76 percent as much as men. This means \$24 less to spend on groceries, housing, child care, and other expenses for every \$100 worth of work women do. And these figures are worse for women of color: African-American women earn only 67 cents – and Latinas only 58 cents – for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.

Various factors play a role in the wage gap between men and women. Women who leave the workforce temporarily in order to care for children or their elderly parents may suffer the consequences of a wage gap. Women are also less likely than men to join a labor union; therefore, they miss out on the benefits that come from organizing. Another factor in the gender wage gap includes the career path a person chooses. It is not uncommon for women to choose careers in the teaching and social service fields, in which salaries tend to be lower than in business or other professions.

Yet, there is more that can and should be done to level the playing field and provide fair opportunities for women in education and the workplace. We should pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which is sponsored by Rep. DeLauro and which I am proud to cosponsor, to curb gender-based wage discrimination in the workplace.

We must also encourage girls to explore non-traditional courses of study to broaden their career options. We need to create new opportunities for women in small businesses. And we must assist with child care services to help working families.”

In addition to his cosponsorship of the Paycheck Fairness Act, Congressman Sestak has been advocating for other priorities for women, including supporting increased funding for Department of Defense peer-reviewed breast cancer research program and supporting full funding for Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs in the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Justice.

Further, as the Vice Chair of the Small Business Committee and as a Member of the Subcommittee on Contracting and Technology, Congressman Sestak joined Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez and Congressman Bruce Braley in holding a hearing today on the state of women-owned businesses in federal government contracting. In 1994, through the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA), Congress established a statutory goal of not less than five percent of the total value of all Federal Government prime contract and subcontract awards for each fiscal year going to women-owned small businesses. While federal contract dollars has been increasing, it is still well short of the five percent statutory goal. Additionally, despite its enactment in 2000, the SBA has failed to implement the Women's Procurement Program, which would significantly increase the likelihood that women-owned companies would receive government contract awards.

This summer, Congressman Sestak will be holding a summit on women's issues.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. □ According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

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